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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Arbitrary dention in Indonesia

Indonesia has emerged as a model for democracy in South East Asia. Since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, the country has adopted a more inclusive political system, reduced the military's authority, empowered local jurisdictions, achieved more stability across the archipelago, and sustained strong economic growth. The 2014 elections marked a crucial turning point for Indonesia's democracy. Following successful parliamentary elections in April, nearly 135 million Indonesians went to the polls in July of that year to directly elect their next president. The competitive race between Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, governor of Jakarta, and Prabowo Subianto, a former special-forces general, resulted in the most closely contested presidential election in the nation's history. But its transition to democracy has not been without setbacks and major challenges. Indonesia's ambitious programs of institutional reform and democratization have been marred by violent protests, ethnic and sectarian strife and movements calling for the respect of basic human rights and the right to self-determination.

Despite this democratization, the threats against human rights defenders in Papua and the Moluccas are on the rise. Society for Threatened Peoples welcomes the release of five Papuan political prisoners, announced during the visit of President Widodo in Papua in May 2015. But despite these positive developments, there were new arrests of Papuan activists in the last months. On 3 July 2015, some 40 indigenous Papuans were arrested during a prayer session in Fakfak (West Papua Province). The Papuans wanted have organized the event to thank the Melanesian Spearhead Group of Melanesian states for their support of the West Papua issue. Three men remain in detention and are facing trial for public order offenses.

Since May 2015, 264 people have been arrested by Indonesian police for supporting the West Papuan Independence movement "United Liberation Movement of West Papua (ULMWP)". Most of the arrests were made on May 1, 2015, in the towns of Merauke, Jayapura, Kaimana and Manokwari during ceremonies to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the administrative transfer of Papua to Indonesia. Three of the arrested Papuans are still imprisoned and will be put on trial.

Five members of the "Independent Papua Committee (KIP)", which is acting as a facilitator for talks of the authorities with pro-independence movements, were arrested on April 14 in Jayapura and imprisoned for three weeks under treason charges. Four of the five arrested representatives had met with the Indonesian Minister of Defense only four days before their arrest and wanted to report about their activities at a press conference in Jayapura.

In August 2015, at least 51 political prisoners from Papua still are held in Indonesian custody. Some of them have been reporting about abuse and torture during imprisonment. The arbitrary arrests are documenting that Indonesian authorities are trying by any means to oppress the public call for the right to self-determination of West Papua. Furthermore, we are very much concerned about arbitrary detention in the Moluccas Islands. At least 29 Moluccans still are jailed for peacefully raising banned symbols as the South Moluccan RMS flag or for advocating for more self-determination.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge Indonesia to stop arbitrary detention, to release all political prisoners and to ensure the freedom of expression in West Papua and the Moluccas.